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The Soviet Church as a Church-Organized Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

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In the distant background of our everyday life stands the “Soviet Church.” It is against this dreadful backdrop that we truly perceive the inexpressible happiness of our freedom. We look with sorrow upon our fellow believers who refuse to comprehend either the human tragedy or the spiritual depravity embodied in this expression—an expression which should have remained merely an example of what in logic is called *contradictio in adjecto* (a contradiction in terms). The contradiction between the adjective “Soviet” and the noun “Church” is irreconcilable: if it is “Soviet,” then it is no longer “Church”—and woe to those who do not wish to understand this.

Our Russian Orthodox Church Abroad grew out of the awareness of the doomed corruption of that “church” which could become “Soviet.” Yet, in our daily life abroad, we usually perceive these terrible distortions only peripherally. Before us stand the living realities of the present, emerging in the blessed atmosphere of freedom. And suddenly, before our very eyes, the “Soviet Church” has appeared as a living phenomenon, intruding into our daily existence—precisely coinciding with the sessions of our Diocesan Assembly.



The reaction to this event was deeply significant. On the one hand, the members of the Assembly—whose composition has remained almost unchanged from year to year—had perhaps never felt so united as they did in their rejection of the Soviet church delegation, which, acting on the orders of the Soviet God-fighters, dared to speak on behalf of Russia and Russian Orthodoxy. Out of this rejection there arose something new: the need to raise a voice and bear witness before the free world to the deception of which it has become a victim—mistaking for a genuine “church phenomenon” that which is merely Soviet propaganda cloaked in ecclesiastical appearance. On the other hand, alongside the need to “go out into the public square,” there arose another: to turn inward, setting one’s inner life face to face with the Truth of Christ’s Church. Are we truly of the Church? What must we do to be genuine members of the Church—the Body of Christ?

Archimandrite Constantine with I.M. Andreyev

In this combination of two simultaneously emerging yet opposite spiritual movements—to “go forth publicly” and to turn inward before Christ’s Truth—lay the essential character of the Assembly: the realization that the time of confession has come. That confession of faith defines the fundamental mission of the Church Abroad has always been clear. The oppression of Satanic rule, which crushes one part of the Church, lessens the responsibility of those enslaved under that terrible yoke—and in some sense even removes it—particularly in regard to open public expression of faith; the very concept of the “catacomb” implies a special mode of life. Yet all the more does responsibility increase—especially for public witness!—for that part of the Church which, by God’s mercy, bears the obedience of freedom. Never before, however, has the task of public witness stood with such force as now, when it appears as an urgent, practical duty of the present day—a duty uniting all, from the foremost hierarchs of the Church to her humblest members.

The “Soviet Church” is a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, taking on deceptive ecclesiastical and organizational forms. And what did the Lord say about such blasphemy? There is reason to be horrified—and to recoil. We are not now speaking of inner Russia, where terror reigns and the corrupting power of satanic rule is at work—it is enough for us to acknowledge the depth of the tragedy experienced by the enslaved Russian people. God is their Judge! But woe to those who, being in freedom, cannot recoil from such impiety.

Yet is it always enough merely to recoil? One can, for the salvation of one’s soul, withdraw from something external—from that which one can avoid. But what if the spirit of deceit has already penetrated into the very fabric of life itself? Then one must define oneself in such a way as not to fall into silent solidarity with evil. If Metropolitan Nikolai were to visit the free world simply as a representative of the USSR for purposes of propaganda and collaboration with forces sympathetic to communism, that would be one thing. But it is quite another when Metropolitan Nikolai, heading a delegation uniting various confessions, comes as a guest on a reciprocal visit to the powerful ecumenical organization of Christian churches. Here we see nothing less than worldwide ecclesiastical solidarity with the Soviet Church.

It is comforting to know that, within the same ecumenical framework—though in modest form—there arises a Protestant confession of faith, recoiling from the Soviet Church and publicly bearing witness to its rejection. But is it enough for us merely to know this? We must also act. New tasks arise—immense, of the highest responsibility.

The world around us is still free. Are we entitled now to use the blessings of this still-existing formal freedom only to remain faithful inwardly to the true Church? Since the struggle with the spirit of deceit is now being waged on a worldwide scale—through the inclusion of world Christianity and even universal Orthodoxy in communion with the Soviet pseudo-church—can we remain mere spectators?

The demands of ecclesiastical conscience outpace theoretical deliberations. The public, open—even street-level—reaction of the Russian diaspora to the arrival of the Soviet “churchmen” as guests of the ecumenical movement has already become a reality. It is encouraging that the actions of St. Vladimir’s youth—who, in forms permitted by local customs and laws, brought to public attention the God-opposing nature of the Soviet church delegation—anticipated the decisions of the Diocesan Assembly. It is likewise heartening that the prophetic word of the First Hierarch, which opened the Assembly, had already “dotted all the i’s.” There was nothing left to debate: the ecclesiastical conscience spoke through all mouths, placing the pen in the hands of some, calling others to lawful action.

We enter a new era visibly. Prudence will guide the measure and form of our participation in the growing resistance to the expanding Evil which seeks to replace Christ’s Church on a universal scale, under the clear direction of the “Soviet Church.” The horror of Soviet reality no longer exhausts this God-opposing phenomenon: with its tentacles, it now encircles the world. Previously, the connections leading from the free world to Red Moscow—veiled under a façade of religiosity—were only faintly traceable. Now these ties are becoming visibly stronger, sometimes taking on loud and demonstrative forms.

Let us therefore observe the reality around us attentively, striving to recognize in time both the ominous signs of growing Apostasy and the consoling signs of steadfastness in Truth. Let us also be kindly attentive to signs of awakening among the wavering and enlightenment among the deluded. It was heartening to read, in the pages of *Novoe Russkoe Slovo*, Ksenia Denikina's inspired article revealing to the diverse readership of that newspaper—so far from Orthodoxy and indeed from any form of church life—the full depth of the spiritual corruption of the so-called “Soviet Church.” It was likewise heartening to read a similar article by Protopresbyter P. Kokhanik in *Rossiya*, and to encounter in various American publications glimpses of understanding of the grave error and sin being committed by welcoming Soviet guests as supposed representatives of the Church.

How lasting will all this be? The future will show. And in this “future,” which each day becomes our “present,” we must carefully choose our companions, friends, and co-workers. Let us not rashly reject those who have not yet spoken their final word regarding their relationship with the “Soviet Church,” but let us strengthen our bonds only with those who show the ability to grasp the ultimate horror of communion between believing Christians and that image of Apostasy which has become a church-organized blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

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